

FUJI FACTS

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The Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Columbus

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The Editor's Column by Warren Lieuallen

This month's telecommunication topic seems to have been a popular one. Although I personally wrote two of the feature articles, other members also turned out in record numbers to help fill out the pages of Fuji Facts. You may notice, in fact, that this issue is four pages thicker than most. I hope this is a trend that will continue.

With this new enthusiasm in mind, I would like to raise several issues:

1) I personally like the concept of monthly "topics" for the newsletter. While I will never refuse any Atari-related material, packaging a number of similar articles into one issue makes it more comprehensive, more polished, and easier to find reprints in the future. Therefore, I will try to come up with a topic for each month, and will announce these at the monthly meetings. As usual, submissions will be encouraged, but not pleaded for. I'll publish as much or as little as I get (more on this in the next paragraph).

2) I would like to appoint a Newsletter Staff. Let me explain. Now that I've been doing this for a year and a half, I've just about got the hang of it. The entire editing and printing process go fairly effortlessly, and things tend to progress right on schedule. Nonetheless, there are always a few minor jobs that are very

inconvenient for me, due to either time or geography.

So, the point of all this rambling is that I want a few volunteers to serve on the Newsletter Staff, and basically be my flunkies! I have several very simple tasks which would be easy for two or three people to accomplish, but that are very inconvenient for just poor ol' me! So, the ball's in your court. If you'd like to help improve Fuji Facts, just contact me. If not, expect some changes anyway, but not necessarily positive ones. My current work schedule will not allow the kind of time commitment that I've been putting into this newsletter, and there will be some cut-backs. I'm hoping that someone will be willing to pick up the slack.

3) After the success of the "Name the Newsletter" affair, I'd also like to propose another contest. Our club needs a logo: some kind of a unique design to grace the cover of Fuji Facts, and all other official club correspondence. I'd love to do this myself, but I can't draw to save my life! Surely, one of our members has a modicum of artistic and creative talent (are you reading this, Dick?). Design the winning logo, and fame, fortune and respect will be yours! All entries can be forwarded to me, and the winner will be selected by the current officers.

(cont. on page 15)

Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Columbus

This newsletter is written and published monthly by the Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Columbus (ACEC). ACEC is an independent, non-profit organization interested in exchanging information about any and all Atari Home Computer Systems.

Our main meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at 7:15 p.m., at DeSales High School (on Karl Road, just south of Morse Rd.), and are open to the public. Other Special Interest meetings are held as announced at the main meeting.

Dues are \$12.00 per year, and entitle members to all club benefits (Newsletter, Disk of the Month, Publications Library, SIG meetings, group discounts at selected area merchants, etc.).

Fuji Facts welcomes contributions of articles, reviews, editorials and any other material relating to the Atari computers, or compatible hardware devices and software packages.

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CompuServe's SIG*Atari

by Warren Lieuallen

Many of you have heard talk during the meetings similar to "... and I heard on CompuServe..." or "... this new file from CompuServe...". Perhaps you'd like to know just what is this "CompuServe".

Simply put, CompuServe is probably the largest BBS in the country, if not the world! It actually started as a "Rent-a-Mainframe" company, selling time on one of its huge mainframe computers to companies that just couldn't justify the expense of purchasing one of these behemoths themselves. Realizing the potential of the then un-tapped personal computing market, they also sold computer time to owners of smaller, "home computers" (that's you and me!).

This led to the formation of the special interest groups (SIG's), also known as forums. People interested in specific topics (such as Atari computers, or photography, or gardening, or....) each have a specific area assigned to them. Within each forum, a number of different activities take place.

Certainly the two most popular activities are the message base, and the software library. These both really serve similar purposes: the exchange of information and programs dealing with the Atari computers. Here is where the advantage of size is most obvious. Just ask a question in the Atari SIG, and within a day or two, you'll have received several answers. Just think of a task for your Atari; there's a program in the libraries that can do it.

When you're first starting out on CompuServe, everything works via

menus. At every level, you are shown all of your choices, and given a brief explanation of them. These menus are very helpful, because to the new user, CompuServe's sheer size presents a problem in the complexity of its organization. Several hours on-line will be required before you begin to feel comfortable. Although not required, once you do become more familiar with the structure and function of the SIG, you'll probably progress to the "expert" mode, which eliminates all the menus altogether.

As an example, here's the introductory menu to the Atari eight-bit SIG:

CompuServe ATARI8
Welcome to ATARI 8-Bit Forum, V. 4B(154)

Hello, Warren Lieuallen
Last visit: 04-Nov-87 14:52:54

Forum messages: 196605 to 197247
Last message you've read: 196753

Subtopic(s) Selected:
All Accessible
No members are in conference.

ATARI 8-Bit Forum
FUNCTIONS

- 1 (L) Leave a Message
- 2 (R) Read Messages
- 3 (OO) Conference Mode
- 4 (DL) Data Libraries
- 5 (B) Bulletins
- 6 (MD) Member Directory
- 7 (OP) User Options
- 8 (IN) Instructions

Enter choice !

You now select which area of the forum to use. Let's say you want to

read some messages. Select "R" from the menu, and you'll be presented with the following :

READ MESSAGES

- 1 (RF) Forward
- 2 (RR) Reverse
- 3 (RT) Threads
- 4 (RS) Search
- 5 (RM) Marked
- 6 (RI) Individual
- 7 (QS) Quick Scan
- 8 (BR) Browse

Enter choice !

At this point, there is a bit of a dilemma. Aside from confusion about things like "threads" and the difference between "browsing" and "scanning", the major problem is simply the volume of messages present within the forum. What is most difficult for most CompuServe users to accept is the fact that you simply can't read it all (unless you happen to be independently wealthy!). There are more than 150 messages posted every day; to keep up with all of them would not only require a significant amount of time, it would also drain your finances to a new low!

So, the technique of selective reading becomes important. Luckily, there are several different, and easy ways to do this. I'll leave the details to a future article or demo.

All right, you've read some messages now. One of them mentioned a fantastic new program found in one of the software libraries. So, from the main menu, you pick "DL". Here's what you'll see:

Data Libraries Available:

- 0 General
- 1 Games
- 2 Telecommunications
- 3 Utilities
- 4 Graphics/RLE/PICs
- 5 Application pgms
- 6 Sound & Music
- 7 News & Reviews
- 9 BBS Programs/Info
- 11 ICD/KYAN/OSS Files
- 12 SIG Oldies/Classics

Enter Choice !

Once you've narrowed your choice down to one of these categories, you may then directly select the file (if you know its name), or "browse" through the directory. Keywords are used to narrow down your selections, and all files are accompanied by a short description, so you can decide whether to download the file or not.

Notice that several of the choices pertain not to program categories, but to specific companies. These are areas reserved to these software manufacturers for distribution of upgrades, and user modifications to the programs, as well as text files full of helpful information. These areas are also very useful for contacting the manufacturer with any questions you might have. To me, this demonstrates customer support to the extreme!

There's also DL #12, which contains an archive of "The Best of CompuServe". This is where all of the most popular and useful files are placed, making them easier to find. I'm working on compiling a complete directory (with descriptions), and will make it available to the club when it's done.

Another useful area of the forum is the bulletins section. Similar to most private bulletin board systems,

CompuServe has some information they'd like you to know. The easiest way to see it is to read the bulletins by selecting "B" from the main menu. Here's how:

BULLETINS

- 1 Short
- 2 Regular
- 3 Conference
- 4 Data Library
- 5 Membership Information
- 6 Sysop Roster
- 7 New Member

Enter choice !

The short bulletins are displayed the first time you enter the forum; the regular bulletins usually just add more in-depth information for those interested. The data library bulletins are presented used to list the prior week's uploads, which makes it easier to keep current as to what's available in all the DL's.

One of the nicer features of the CompuServe forums is that they can be tailored to your particular needs. By selecting options from the main menu, you're presented with this:

USER OPTIONS

- [] represents current setting
- 1 (SM) Stop After Msgs [Always]
 - 2 (CN) Name [Warren Lieuallen]
 - 3 (PC) Prompt Character [>]
 - 4 (ED) Editor [EDIT]
 - 5 (SU) Subtopics [...]
 - 6 (HI) High Msg Read [196753]
 - 7 (RE) Replies Info [List]
 - 8 (UM) Use Menus [No]
 - 9 (TY) Type Waiting Msgs [Yes]
 - 10 (SK) Skip Msgs You Left [Yes]

As you can see, you can customize many of the ways in which the forum works. This flexibility is just one of the strong points of the CompuServe forums. They manage to serve just about everyone's needs, and with just

a little introductory work, you should be able to get around and find what you want quickly and easily. I highly recommend it to anyone wanting to learn more about their Atari computer.

Don't get me wrong, CompuServe is not perfect. It takes some getting used to, and sometimes it's too large; messages scroll off the message base as quickly as they are posted (if you don't call once a week or so, you may miss a message directed specifically at you). By far the major disadvantage though is cost.

Through a new policy, there is no longer a difference between "prime time" (day time) and "discount time" (evening and weekend) rates. CompuServe's rates are always (as far as I know) \$6.00 Per hour for 300 baud, \$12.50/Hr for 1200 baud and \$19.00/Hr for 2400 baud. These rates are at the high end of the range for similar services (see related GENie article), and do not include the communications surcharge (which ranges from \$0.25/hr for a direct-dial CompuServe node to \$2.00/hr for Telenet or Tymnet to \$14.00/hr for Tymnet via Western Union for subscribers in Hawaii!

Although these rates boil down to \$0.10 per minute at 300 baud, and \$0.21 per minute at 1200 baud, they really do add up. It's distressingly simple to call up just to "read a few messages", and end up staying on for more than an hour. Do this every weekend for a year and you just spent over \$300! And I haven't even mentioned the very addicting real-time CB simulator and multi-player games!

I've been a CompuServe subscriber for nearly two years, and I'm very happy with it. It fills a need for information and assistance that I just can't seem to get anywhere else. Got a question about PaperClip? Why call

(cont. on page 12)

THE GENie ATARI ROUNDTABLE

by Warren Lieuallen

I have to preface this article with a warning. I was introduced to commercial information services on CompuServe. That's where I got broken in and cut my "telecommunicating" teeth. To this day, that's the service that feels like home.

I've only been a GENie subscriber for two months. Although I found it much easier to learn the ropes due to my past experiences, the entire GENie set-up still feels alien to me. I have a much harder time doing the specific things I want to do, and when I finally do learn where I want to go, the Sysops change things around!

So, be forewarned -- I find GENie less "user-friendly" and more troublesome to use. Rather than presenting GENie for its own merits, I'm sure I will simply compare it to CompuServe. Nonetheless....

GENie, a division of General Electric is another of the "Rent a Piece of My Mainframe" companies that has sprung up. As with the other services, it offers specific areas devoted to particular topics, and had the foresight to set up areas for the Atari computer systems.

GENie functions via menus, which are very helpful to the new user. The command used to pick different areas, however, requires you to know where you want to go (for instance, the Atari eight-bit area begins on page 665, rather than on some keyword like ATARI8), unless you don't mind fifteen minutes of meandering around various menus.

Once you arrive in the Atari area, you are greeted with:

Welcome Warren G. Lieuallen
Last visit at: 09:41 on: 871010

```

      ** ** **
Welcome  ** ** **
To       ** ** **      8-Bit
the      ** ** **      ...
GENie    ** ** * ** Connection!
ATARI    *** ** ***
      *** ** ***
```

The Official Information Service of
The Atari Corporation

```
*****
* Roundtable SysOps:          *
* Darlah Hudson* (DARLAH)    *
* Marty Albert * (MARTY.A)   *
* -----                    *
* Atari On-Line:              *
* Neil Harris * (NHARRIS)    *
* Darryl May * (DMAY)        *
* Greg Kranich * (G-KRANICH) *
*****
Weekly Open Conference every
Thursday night - 10PM EDT, 7PM PDT
```

No Members in Conference

GENie ATARI8 Page 665
 Atari 8-Bit RoundTable
 Library: ALL Libraries

1. Atari Bulletin Board
2. Atari Real-Time Conference
3. Atari Software Libraries
4. About the RoundTable
5. RoundTable News 870917

Enter #, <P>previous, or <H>help?

This brings me to my first complaint. Although relatively minor, all these menus take a while to scroll by at 300 baud. Once I see the choice I want, I'd like to interrupt the system, and proceed (I do this on CompuServe with Ctrl-O). However,

on GENie, sending a break signal causes the menu to repeat all over again ! The only solution I've found is to enter GENie's "command" mode, and turn the menus off with the prompt command. This works fine, but requires you know exactly what you are doing (it's an "expert" mode). So, capture and print all the menus the first time, and become an instant expert!

From this menu, you select which area you'd like to enter. Let's read some messages, by entering a "1". Here's what follows:

GENie

Atari RoundTable Bulletin Board

Hello Warren G. Lieuallen

Last On: Sat Nov 01, 1987 at 10:03 EDT

Category 1 General Information

1 CATEGORIES	10 INDEX of topics
2 NEW messages	11 SEARCH topics
3 SET category	12 DELETE message
4 DESCRIBE category	13 IGNORE category
5 TOPIC list	14 PROMPT setting
6 BROWSE new msgs	15 SCROLL setting
7 READ a message	16 NAME used in BB
8 REPLY to a topic	17 EXIT
9 START a topic	18 HELP

Enter #, <Command> or <HEL>p?

Here's another gripe. All of GENie's messages are organized into a number of topics, within ten main categories. While this organization is quite admirable, it makes it much more difficult to specifically read selected messages. You essentially have to read the entire topic, and you can not reply to any message until you've read them all (by which time, I've usually forgotten exactly what I wanted to say, and to whom!). While there is a command (IND) to list all the topics, the listing is nine pages long, and changes frequently (I tried to read topic 39 [Daisy Dot Support] last

week, only to find out that there is no topic 39 anymore!).

However, find some topic you're interested in, and read away. After all that reading, you might want to look around for some software. Here, GENie shines! Select the software libraries from the main menu, and you'll see:

GENie

Page 666

Atari Software Library

Library: ALL Libraries

1. Description of this Library
2. Directory of files
3. Search File Directory
4. Browse through files
5. Upload a new file
6. Download a file
7. Delete a file you own
8. Set Software Library
9. Save Current Software Library
10. Instructions for Software Exchange

Enter #, <P>revious, or <H>elp?

The major advantages are these: GENie files are listed in reverse chronological order; a complete listing is available for download; a new "searcher" program is available to help you sort through it all.

When you browse for a file, also using keywords, the latest files are presented first. This makes it simple to keep current; just read until you see a file you already know about. You're always presented with the newest, most recent uploads first.

Sysop Marty Albert has assembled a complete listing of the entire library's contents, and it is available as an ARC'd file (and a big one at that!). In addition, every month, he adds a supplemental file, making it a simple chore to update your listings.

Finally, there is now a BASIC program to list and search through these files off-line, once you've downloaded the contents files. I mention this mostly out of selfish pride, since this GENie searcher program happens to one I wrote myself! Read category 1, topic 87 for all the info.

The GENie libraries are, at present, more limited than those of CompuServe. This is because they are new enough to be affected by the refusal of the major magazines to allow posting of their programs (specifically, Analog and Antic [boo, hiss!]). CompuServe seems to have fallen under the grandfather clause, because there are still a number of these programs posted there (although I can't recall seeing any of the newer ones).

There are several other features which are in GENie's favor. There seem to just as many knowledgeable people in its message bases, and they seem to be quite active. A wide range of subjects is available, with more being added every day (some, although are deleted every day, too). The sysops seem to be a source of never-ending patience and altruism, as any question, no matter how simple or how repetitive it may be, is always answered quickly and courteously. Come to think of it, most of the message base areas seem more relaxed and informal than their CompuServe counterparts (while I am probably the stuffiest and stodgiest person I know, I find this atmosphere surprisingly refreshing [just so it doesn't get out of hand!]).

GENie seems to be the new favorite with the Atari community. Many software developers are present, and a number of "famous" names from the public domain world are there. The weekly conferences are quite

popular, and are often reprinted in various clubs' newsletters (maybe even ours someday!). In fact, Atari Corp. itself now graces GENie with its presence (explaining the "Official Information Service of the Atari Corp. in the Intro to the RoundTable). So, if you'd like to be one of the first to hear the word from the likes of Neil Harris, GENie is the place for you (of course, are you actually going to believe the likes of Neil Harris?!).

GENie's biggest advantage, though, has nothing to do with the Atari computer. It has to do with the almighty dollar -- GENie wants a few less of them! Standard evening and weekend rates are \$5.00 Per hour, for both 300 and 1200 baud (Telenet and Tymnet fees extra). However, for those of you that call from the office (as I'd like to do), their daytime rates are \$35.00 for the same hour!

With the increase in Atari related activity, and the less expensive rates, GENie has become quite popular. Which is best for you? Only you know the answer. Most people seem to be subscribing to both services (seems a little counter-productive to be paying \$11.00 per hour to read the same stuff twice!) -- As they become more and more similar, this may change. No matter which you choose, I'm sure you'll enjoy the experience.

I'll see you on-line!

HOT NEW BULLETIN BOARD NUMBERS!

By Captain C.T. Pike, Jr.

As a continuing feature, this newsletter strives to keep you up to date on the latest happenings in the world of electronic bulletin boards. For those of you who have modems, we present here fresh, hot-off-the-press updates on the most popular new BBSes in the area. For those without modems, you'll surely want to rush out and buy one after reading this article.

Disclaimer: opinions expressed in this article are not those of the management of this (or any other) esteemed periodical. Also, any similarity between the characters, places, and events in this article and any real people (living, electronic, or other) is strictly coincidental, humorous, and probably well deserved.

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THE CICADA BBS, 555-6666. This BBS has more bugs than the ACEC board. It's part of the fun of bulletin boarding to call up and get error messages, isn't it?! Well, this BBS, using the DOS-n-BUG program, really keeps the user on his or her toes. It puts out fake error messages after you've typed in a lengthy message or uploaded a long file. (The sysop disavows any responsibility for your resulting heart attack.) And at key moments the program produces simulated lockups. Then it spits nasty messages when you hit keys like escape, break, restart, or choke. After some crucial seconds go by--just enough to leave you panicked and frustrated -- it goes live and says "fooled you!, Didn't I?!" You must call this board. It's a riot.

CYTO-PLASM BBS, 555-0000. One of the biggest bulletin boards on the planet, with a billion megs! However, it's all filled up, even though all files are "nuked" (superduperscrunched) down to a few bytes each. Unfortunately, the "de-nuke" program has more bugs than the entire Silicon Valley, making all the programs nonfunctional.

JUMPIN' JACK'S BBS, 555-0909. This board is up and down more than a yoyo. Sysop Jack "the bean" Stalk

puts the board up at random hours each day. "We're the most dependable BBS around," he says. "You never know when we're up. You can't get any more reliable than that."

SYSOPLAND BBS, 555-5555. The ultimate computer bulletin board, for sysops only. There's no such thing as a "new user" on this board: the only way to get on is to have called before and already gotten your access validated.

THE BILLBORED BBS, 555-3456. Sysop Bill Bored, tired of a lifetime of being the butt of jokes about his name, gets his revenge online. The special feature of his BBS is its download directory, which contains nothing but bills. When you download a file, you get a bill: you owe the Phone Co. \$20. ... You owe the Electric co. \$90. ... You owe the Milkman \$15. ... And on and on. It's loads of fun.

BEDLAM BBS, 555-9999. Remember the old insanity message base on a certain BBS? Well, this BBS makes Doc Strange look like child's play. The bedlam board is run by Dr. Baby, who wants to grow up to be an obstetrician. Only sick folks call this BBS. As Dr. Baby would put it, "Uucchhh! Der-splat! He he he he. Ker-plunk! Barf! Spludge! Ha ha ha. Brrapppp!! (Filth!) He he he he."

etc., etc., ad nauseum. The idea behind this BBS seems to be to give juvenility a bad name. It succeeds.

ADAM AND EVE'S BBS, 555-6969. This is the "playboy channel" of modemland -- a "love board" 4 U, as they say. All the messages contain vague sexual innuendos, double entendres, talk about bogus "olympics", etc. But while there seem to be thousands of callers leaving these lovey notes, in reality all the messages are sent by just five lonely guys masquerading as stags and broads under a multitude of "handles." It's truuuuee!

The unwary caller who doesn't know this has to sit through hours and hours of messages -- hundreds of new ones every day! -- Thinking to himself that this must be a great BBS because it's so busy. "Boy," he thinks, "there must be lots of dates out there." Meanwhile, the sysop and his four lonely friends are having a beer blast on the other side of the screen as they watch the sucker -- er, caller -- vainly trying to zip through the voluminous verbiage.

"Hey," one of them says, "let's disable Control-N. Let's disable Control-Everything! That'll slow 'em down!" They spend all their spare time typing up mountains of phoney messages to put on the eight-disk drive system. Their biggest worry is running out of pseudonyms.

BOGEY BILL'S BIG BOY BBS, OR THE BBBBBS, 555-8888. Don't tell anybody, okay? This is just between us, right? This is the ace, prime, big-cheese, numero uno bulletin board around. It operates at 614,400 baud on a Cray-64 home computer, the most powerful "personal" computer on this side of the galaxy. It's so strong that if you 300-bauders so much as try to call in, your computer will be fried

to smithereens right over the phone line!

This BBS is so secret that Sysop Bill has to keep it on the run 24 hours a day, like the Air Force's flying command center airborne all the time over the SAC base at Omaha. Bill's BBS hardware is permanently installed in his supervan, with a mobile phone signal beamed to a payphone at the corner of Eighth and State. You'll see the van circling the area on I-270, except when the feds home in on the signal and Bill's forced to take to the back streets.

Every 8-bit program ever written is in the files section of this BBS, and the sysops maintain a staff of chimpanzees randomly typing away 18 hours a day on a whole bunch of keyboards in order to keep up the supply of programs. (Remember the old theory about how if you give a chimp enough time to randomly hit the keys, he will eventually come up with Shakespeare? Well, that's wrong. But it works here, because it's REAL EASY to create 8-bit computer programs!)

For those of you pirates too cheap to buy a 614,400 baud modem, just get a 9600 baud modem and boost its output by a factor of 64. To keep your status on the BBBBBS, make sure to upload 15 of your own crummy programs for each download, and no fair changing filenames of programs already uploaded!

THE CATCH 22 BBS, 555-2222. Prof. Doubledome, the sysop, has taken this board private, according to the news he's been spreading all over local boards. But when you go to apply for his "free trial," your application is rejected because Prof. Doubledome considers you to be a hacker who only wants to destroy his BBS.

THE MUSTANG BBS, 555-4884. Remember the BBS set up by some attorneys? Well, they merged with the board run by the horse park of a certain nearby state. Now you legal beagles can get online advice straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak. (And if you don't like what you get, you can always complain that it came from the horse's other end.)

SESAME STREET BBS, 555-1234. This is another one of those itsy-bitsy boards, run by an eager-beaver 12-year-old. You know, the kind run on a [brand name deleted] computer, claiming to be up 24 hours a day, ten days a week, and 48 hours a day on weekends? The kind of BBS you saw advertised on very "general" message base within 500 miles, with messages left by Kiddie the sysop saying "Call my board!," "Call the crock board!," "Call my board!," etc., etc., and then when you do, it's disconnected.

The usual story in these cases is that kiddo has been sneaking the BBS onto the phone line when his parents are away at work during the day. When the parents get tired of shrill, 100 decibel beeps on the phone at 4 a.m., they rip the phone out of the house. The only winner here is the phone company, who charge you for making a call even though all you got was one of their blasted messages. (But that line noise makes for great graphics effects on the screen, doesn't it?! Better than the ASCII pictures on RJ's.)

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(Captain C.T. Pike Jr. is the nom-de-modem of a curmudgeon who reportedly uses his IBM clone for "serious" computing, but retains loyalty to the old Atari game machine. Capt. Pike evidently is a veteran caller to public access bulletin boards.)

While you're at it why not call the ACEC BBS?

471-8559

24 hours, 300/1200 baud

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To My Darling Husband;

I am sending you this letter in a bogus software company envelope so that you will be sure to read it. Please forgive the deception, but I thought you should know what has been going on at home since your computer entered our lives two years ago.

The children are doing well. Tony is seven now, and is a bright, handsome boy. He has developed quite an interest in the arts. He drew a family portrait for a school project. All the figures were good, but yours was excellent! The chair and the back of your head are very realistic. You would be very proud of him.

Your daughter Laura turned four in October. She looks a lot like you did at that age. She is an attractive child and quite smart. She still remembers that you spent the whole afternoon with us on her birthday. What a grand day for Laura, despite the fact that it was stormy and the electricity was out.

I am also doing well. I went blonde about a year ago, and was delighted to discover that it really is more fun! Lars -- I mean Mr. Swenson, the department head -- has taken an interest in my career and has become a good friend to us all. I have discovered that household chores are much easier since I realized that you didn't mind being vacuumed, but that feather dusting made you sneeze.

The house is in good shape. I had the living room painted last spring. I'm not sure you noticed it. I made sure the painters cut a hole in the drop cloth so that you could still breathe.

Well, my dear, I must be going. Uncle Lars -- I mean Mr. Swenson -- is taking us all on a ski trip and there is packing to do. I have hired a housekeeper to take care of things while we are away. She'll keep things in order, fill your coffee cup, and bring your meals to your desk, just the way you like it. I hope you and your computer have a lovely time while we are gone. Tony, Laura and I will think of you often; try and remember us while your disks are booting.

Love,

Joanna

P.S. Editor's Note -- My wife made me reprint this article. I don't know why!

(cont. from page 5)

a question about PaperClip? Why call me when you can leave a message to Dan Moore, one of the program's authors?! Need a utility to remove extra carriage returns, or print double column text, but don't want to write it yourself? For ten minutes download time (approx. \$1.00), It's yours!

It's hard to beat!

MPP Express! by Keith Ledbetter

reviewed by Kevin Watson

Before I get into the review, there's a subject I'd like to cover: these programs are all Public Domain; they cost nothing. However, Keith does NOT make a living by giving programs away. If you like the program, and use it, you really should send him a few bucks. This should help encourage him to continue to release improved updates of these high quality programs.

Like the other Express! programs, the MPP version is in machine language and takes up about 34K on disk. Renaming to AUTORUN.SYS will produce a booting telecommunications disk. When you boot the program, the first thing you'll see is the main menu. The entire operation of the program is controlled from this main menu and the dialing menu. The two main menu screens are toggled with SELECT and OPTION. They function roughly as follows:

Express! is completely compatible with Atari's DOS's (DOS 3 doesn't count!). So far I have found no serious problems with SpartaDOS, either. There IS an inconvenience: wildcards are rejected, so full file names must be used, but that's no big deal. The file functions are comprehensive, giving the user to most of the controls available from DOS, right from the main menu. Buffer control is also pretty complete, including capture-to-disk, send-from-disk; load, send, print, and clear buffer. Xmodem is supported, although Ymodem is not.

The commands for set-up are also pretty complete: just about any modem parameter that is available can be preset to load in at runtime. Other features that are part of the set-up are settings for dial tone, digit,

and pulse delays, and time to wait for dial tone (especially handy for the bizarre long distance connections that you can sometimes run into). There are also controls for screen colors and brightness.

After setting all of these parameters, they can be saved and loaded in with the program when it is started up, or manually loaded at any time.

Pressing "D" from the main menu will take you to the dialing menu. This is another full-function menu, allowing you to add, edit, delete, and view all data for each board including board name, phone number, three macros (handy for passwords), translation, and baud rate. The entire list can be cleared, loaded, saved, and printed. Boards can be marked and scanned to allow you to connect with the first board that gets freed up. Whichever list is saved with the name PHONE.LST will automatically be loaded when the program starts.

Express! runs quickly and smoothly. I have used it heavily for almost a year now, and I have experienced only a single glitch, which is something pretty unusual for most PD programs.

The menu operation is an excellent combination of power and ease of operation, allowing a novice to jump right into telecommunications as effectively as a seasoned veteran.

Although I haven't tried ALL of the other programs, Express! clearly beats everything I have seen by such a wide margin that I'm sure you'll find yourself using it much more than whatever else you add to your library.

A CALL TO ARMS

An Editorial by Warren Lieuallen

The following is an unsolicited and perhaps unduly pessimistic editorial. The opinions expressed in this article are mine, and mine alone. Any response is welcome, and in fact encouraged.

Our club needs a shot in the arm (or any other convenient anatomic site!). Over the past year or so, we have become stagnant. For better or worse, here is the situation as I see it:

More than 85% of our members own only eight-bit Atari systems. Most of the ST owners have left us for CoSTAR, due to our inactivity in the ST area. This is due to a combination of the loss of our ST system to CoSTAR last year, and the fact that nearly all of our "active" members don't have or even want an ST (it's hard to plan ST demos without an ST!). Although we do plan to do something about this, we've been meaning to for more than six months already and

I'm sure you've all read more than you care to about the 8-bit vs. 16-Bit "war", and the "death" of the 8-bit system; further discussion is both pointless and tiresome. In summary, let's just come right out and admit it, the eight-bit Atari system is dead! That's not bad; it's just the way it is. Face it, if you were a software or hardware manufacturer, would you gamble on the old Atari eight-bits? I wouldn't. The 6502 chip is nearly fifteen years old; faster, larger, more versatile computers are now available for a fraction of what the original Atari 400 sold for. That's "Progress" (and you'll get no argument from me that it truly is). These computers, being newer, are selling much better than the old Ataris. New computers need new software, new peripherals,

and generate new enthusiasm. But, the eight-bit Ataris are far from useless and obsolete -- they still perform the tasks they were designed for; they still do what I want a computer to do.

With all the wailing about loss of support for the eight-bit systems, there still remains one place where support is exactly what you get-- your local Atari users' group. ACEC was formed to support local Atari users. Rather than getting discouraged and frustrated with your eight-bits, you should be getting all the more interested and excited in our group!

So, why is both meeting attendance, and membership in general down? Why do the specialized, in-depth SIG meetings always consist of the same four guys? Why has our treasury been consistently decreasing every month for the past six months (after our startling "come-back" from the days of the empty account)? Why is getting someone to do a demo, write an article, or just express an opinion harder than pulling teeth? Is the Columbus Atari community really that pathetic and jaded? Are you all so satisfied with your computers, and knowledge of their working? I'm not.

Clearly, ACEC is not serving the needs of its members. How we could be doing better, I don't know. Our disk library is as active as ever, and the amount of quality, public domain software never ceases to amaze me. Our publication library is growing

larger every month, and can easily and quickly make your computer more enjoyable to use, and save you at least \$56/year. I try to make the newsletter as interesting and informative as possible, and as physically attractive as I can (thanks to those of you that have commented, both good and bad). Our monthly meetings feature up-to-date news and rumors, demos to teach you how to use your computer more efficiently, and answers to literally any question you might have. We sponsor monthly special interest groups, where you can get personalized attention from the best Atari computer users that central Ohio has to offer, on a wide range of topics.

In short, what more do you want? By asking that, I don't mean to be sarcastic (well, maybe just a little!). If there's some way that ACEC can improve, something we could do to interest or help you more, please let us know. Our recently instituted "monthly demo wish list" is a step in the right direction. Other possibilities:

- Should we eliminate the "business" portion of the meeting, or limit it to 5-10 minutes?

- Should we always have at least one 8-bit and one ST demo each month? Should we do these demos for the entire club, or split the meeting into two sections, each going at the same time? Should we just admit who we are, and become an eight-bit-only club (no shame in that!)?

- Should we feature separate "disk library" nights, where you can get disks of the month, and ask questions about our PD programs?

- Should SIG meetings be held the same night as the regular meetings, to allow more people to fit them into

their schedules? Or should the specialized SIG topics be taken up at the main meetings?

- Would you be interested in separate tutorial classes (for a fee of \$10-15) on some specific topic (Desktop Publishing; PaperClip for Power Users; Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Synfile...)?

- If our dues were significantly higher, would you still join -- what would we have to do to get you to join for, say, \$30/year (Don't worry, we're not going to increase the dues... yet!)?

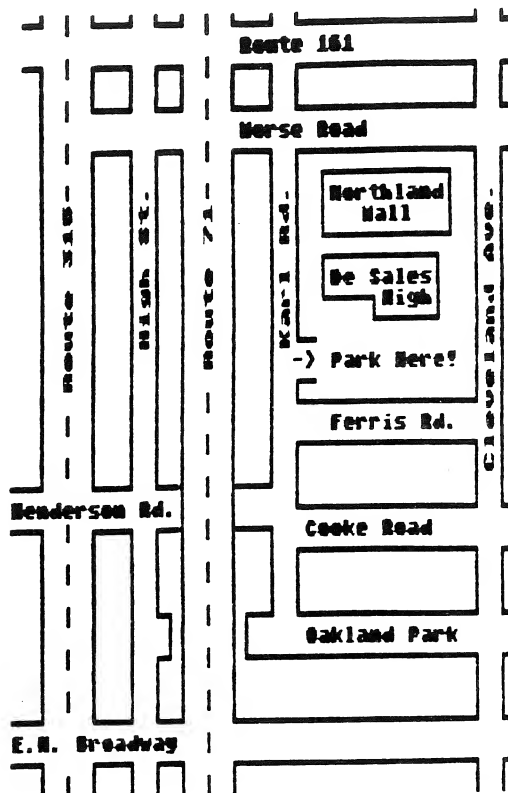
- How do you use your computer? Are you interested in programming (BASIC; Action! Logo; Machine Language...); Application usage; recreational use (viz. game hints!); what?

With your input, ACEC can serve your needs. Without it,

(cont. from page 1)

4) Finally, I'd like to officially welcome the new slate of ACEC officers. A complete listing can be found on page two, as always. Not surprisingly, many familiar names are present. In fact, the only change from last year is in the position of Membership Chairman Paul Rogers. Glad to have you aboard, Paul!

(not to scale)



An official Users' Group, the Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Columbus meets on the SECOND MONDAY of each month. The meetings are held at 7:15 p.m., at De Sales High School on Karl Road. Meetings are open to the public, and consist of demonstrations and short tutorials of products for the Atari Home Computer Systems. Dues for ACEC are \$12.00 per year, and include a subscription to Fuji Facts, and more!

WGL '87

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TO:

MEETING: Nov. 9th, 7:15 pm